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ABSTRACT

The practice of relatives or kin parenting children when their parents cannot is a time-honored tradition in most cultures. Increasingly, however, kinship care is an arrangement that operates within the formal child welfare system. This report focuses on formal kinship care. In the first section, two chapters describe the essential place of kinship care in the array of child welfare services, both in terms of family preservation and out-of-home care. They examine the use of kinship care as a child welfare service under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P. L. 96-272) and as a support for principles of child-centered, family-focused practice. The growth and characteristics of formal kinship care practice are also examined. Chapters in the second section focus on kinship care policy and practice. Chapter 3 summarizes existing policy and law at the federal and state levels, and in relation to litigation. Chapter 4 raises a number of critical policy and practice questions that must be addressed as kinship care policy and practice continue to develop. In the third section, chapters 5 and 6 provide a foundation for the future of kinship care by defining guiding principles, then setting forth a policy and practice framework based on those principles. Each component of the framework is described, and recommendations and action steps are outlined. The fourth section provides an action agenda that will support the continuing development and implementation of quality kinship care policy and practice. The agenda addresses needed activities on the part of child welfare agencies, legislative directions, and issues for further research. Contains 22 references and a list of members of the Child Welfare League's Kinship Care Policy and Practice committee. (TJQ)